

GRAHAM COUNTY LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA

Geography

While many analysts used to link Graham County's economic environment with that of Greenlee County (and the mining industry in general), that link has appeared to weaken. The old presumption stated that while miners would work in Greenlee County, they tended to live and shop in Graham. The statistics confirmed this scenario back in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Lately, however, while Greenlee County has been experiencing strong growth in employment, personal income, and retail sales, and significant increases in construction awards due to the run-up in copper prices between 1993 and 1995, those same statistics for Graham County exhibit no signs of this vigor.

Population

According to the most recent official population figures, produced by the US Census Bureau, 2000 figures show 33,489 people reside in Graham County. This resident population accounts for 0.7 percent of state of Arizona's total population. In the ten years since the 1990 census, Graham County's population grew by nearly 26 percent, or roughly 2.4 percent annually similar to the state as a whole which grew just over 40 percent for the decade. Safford is the largest city in the county, with an estimated population of 9,232. Thatcher is the next largest, with an estimated population of 4,022.

Income

According to data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis from 1990 to 1999, local total personal income in Graham County increased percent 72.5 compared to the State's almost 90 percent. However, on a per capita basis, the gain of 43.3 percent was just below the State's growth of 46.3 percent. Graham County per capita income was \$14,719 in 1999, about 58.5 percent of the state average, down from 59.7 percent in 1990. Average wage per job increased 3.3 percent in 1999 to a level of \$22,677 – 0.8 percent less than the gain for the state at 4.1 percent.

Labor Force

The Graham County labor force fell roughly 2.9 percent each year from 1995 to 2000. Graham County employment figures fell slightly less, however, with an average annual decrease of 2.6 percent. This affected the unemployment rate downward from 8.2 percent in 1995 to 6.5 percent in 2000.

Employment

Nonfarm employment in Graham County increased about 7.7 percent in the 1995-2000 period. Total nonfarm employment gained 500 jobs for the period. Construction and trade fluctuated up or down by less than 1 percent per annum.

Services and Manufacturing registered impressive gains of 5.5 percent and 6.7 percent per year respectively. TCPU lost 4.2 percent on a yearly basis.

Government has consistently been the dominant industry in Graham County, employing 2,625 people. Second is trade at 2,000 jobs, and third is services with 1,525 workers. Combined these three industries account for 87.5% of the total Graham County labor force.

Growing and Declining

During the year 2000, the largest industry job growth was experienced in individual and family services (+47 jobs) and miscellaneous shopping goods stores (+25 jobs). The largest employment losses appeared in offices and clinics of medical doctors (-24 jobs), accounting, auditing and bookkeeping (-19 jobs), and radio, television, and computer stores (-18 jobs). For further details see the enclosed tables.

Forecast

Research Administration is forecasting employment to grow 1.1 percent in PY 01-02 and another 2.6 percent in PY 02-03. Countywide unemployment is expected to decrease slightly from the PY 00-01 rate of 6.7 percent to 6.5 percent in PY 01-02 and afterwards to 6.4 percent in PY 02-03. Unemployment in the non-reservation areas is expected to descend from the PY 00-01 rate of 5.7 percent to 5.5 percent in PY 01-02 and then to 5.4 percent in PY 02-03.

Issues of Concern

- Low job growth

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Research Administration, November 2001.